

DEPARTMENT OF BENEFIT PAYMENTS

744 P Street, Sacramento, CA 95814

(916) 445-6271



December 9, 1977

ALL-COUNTY LETTER NO. 77-54 (Dept. Trng.)

• TO: ALL COUNTY WELFARE DIRECTORS
ALL COUNTY STAFF DEVELOPMENT DIRECTORS
ALL COUNTY PERSONNEL DIRECTORS

— SUBJECT: ORANGE COUNTY MANAGEMENT ASSESSMENT CENTER SPECIAL PROJECT-INVITATION
TO REVIEW

REFERENCE:

— The purpose of this letter is to provide you with some background information regarding the Management Assessment Center (MAC) special project, and to invite you to attend a full day presentation and discussion of the project and its implications for helping county welfare departments to better select successful supervisors.

BACKGROUND:

Under a special project grant from the Department of Benefit Payments, the Orange County Department of Social Services has been conducting a major study of the operational feasibility of using the assessment center method to select candidates for promotion to supervisory positions.

The project was conducted in three phases. The first phase of the project included researching the assessment center method and the availability of assessment center related materials and services, and establishing an assessment center resources library within Orange County DSS. The second phase of the project involved the development of all assessment center materials and exercises necessary to conduct an Eligibility Supervisor I assessment center in Orange County. All exercises, center manuals, and other materials developed were specifically designed so that they would be highly transferable to other counties in the future. This phase also included training management staff to act as assessors during the assessment center. The end of Phase II was marked by the successful conduct of an ESI assessment center in Orange County. Since the completion of this phase, an assessment center for ES II's has also been conducted and evaluated.

— The objective of Phase III of the project is the replication of Orange County's highly successful model assessment center in all counties demonstrating an interest in this selection (and development) device. Phase III includes the training of DBP staff development personnel to conduct assessment centers and to train assessors. DBP training staff will provide consultation and center administrator and assessor training to selected county welfare department staff.

Special project funding was made available from the state to cover the initial high developmental costs of the assessment center. The costs of establishing an assessment center in those counties desiring to use this method will be the county's responsibility. More information about costs of set-up and operation will be available at the orientation workshops.

THE ASSESSMENT CENTER METHOD:

The Management Assessment Center is a device for selecting and developing the most qualified and potentially successful candidates for promotion to supervisory (and management) positions. The assessment center method requires candidates to perform in a variety of job-related situations. The candidates are observed and their behavior is recorded by a number of trained assessors (usually from the management ranks of the organization assessing candidates). The "center" may last one day or a number of days. After all candidates have been observed, the assessors are required to rank the candidates according to their performance in the various exercises, and according to the various job dimensions being observed. After the rankings are made, candidates are given developmental feedback by the assessment center administrator or by the assessors. If the objective of the center is selection, an eligibility list is established and successful candidates are selected for promotion. If the objective of the center is developmental, specific feedback aimed at improving job performance is given to each candidate. Strengths as well as weaknesses are discussed with each assessee.

Because the assessment center's focus is on behavior in job-related tasks, the prospect of favoritism and other forms of selection bias are greatly minimized.

The assessment center method, as a selection and development device, has been proven to be a highly effective way to select the most potentially successful candidates for promotion and/or for developmental efforts. Used extensively in private enterprise, the method is generating greater and greater interest and use in federal and local government circles. The assessment center method is so job-related that the method has never been successfully challenged in the courts.

MANAGEMENT ASSESSMENT CENTER ORIENTATION:

To find out more about what the assessment center method and particularly what the Orange County DSS model can do to help select better candidates for supervisory and management positions, and thereby help avoid the high morale and productivity costs of selecting a poor supervisor, you are invited to attend a one-day MAC orientation workshop. The one-day session will cover in depth the background of assessment centers, the background and objectives of the Orange County project, and a discussion of how the project was implemented in Orange County and what made it as successful as it has been. Ample time will be allowed for you to ask questions and investigate the Orange County MAC model. This one-day workshop will be conducted jointly by Orange County DSS and State Department of Benefit Payments staff. The county and state project managers will conduct the session.

The Assessment Center Orientation workshops are scheduled to be held in both Southern and Northern California. The Southern California workshop will be held on January 18, 1978 in Orange County. The Northern California workshop will be held on January 24, 1978 in Sacramento.

In order to properly plan for facilities and other necessary details associated with the meetings, please inform the department, either in writing or via telephone, if you or your representative plan to attend, and if so which session you will be attending. The department will cover the cost of conducting the two workshops, however, county staff travel costs must be provided by the county.


Please respond directly to:

State Department of Benefit Payments
Departmental Training Bureau
744 P Street, MS 14-62
Sacramento, CA 95814
Attention: Edward D. Salt, Chief

Inquiries about Orange County's experience with the assessment center method may be directed to Mr. Dennis Hart, Director of Social Services, County of Orange, Department of Social Services.

Inquiries about either of the two orientation workshops may be directed to Mr. Edward D. Salt at 916/445-6271.

Sincerely,


MARION J. WOODS
Director

cc: CWDA